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ABSTRACT

This book provides a conceptual basis for viewing the school as an ecology of people and events that goes beyond the school walls. The book argues that everything that goes on in school is inextricably linked to the home--from patterns of thought and behavior to attitudes toward school. The book also provides strategies for parents, teachers, and administrators to enhance collaborative dialogue and action. The book is based on an ethnography conducted in a school district in the western United States. Data were obtained from interviews with parents, teachers, and administrators; observation of parent and community meetings and events; and relevant documents. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the social and historical context of school-parent relationships. A feminist framework is used to redefine parent-school relations as collaborative, and to imbue public school organizational structures and school leadership with an ethic of care, community-building, and a focus on teaching and learning. Chapter 2 details the ethnographic and feminist approach used to study and analyze parent-school relations. The third chapter examines the variety of ways that schools alienate and distance parents, and the part that parents play in implementing reform efforts. The logic of school organization and the construction of schools as competitive bureaucracies is the focus of chapter 4. The fifth chapter takes up the issue of the different organizational structures of elementary, middle, and high schools, and the social and cultural differences between schools and homes. The sixth chapter examines reasons given by parents, teachers, and administrators for the present state of parent involvement in schools and offers a basis for change built around relationship-building and an ethic of care. Chapter 7 further explores the issue of collaboration and community-building, arguing that educators must be committed to working with parents from a variety of social classes and ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The eighth chapter continues the feminist approach by focusing educational leadership and school work in general on teaching and learning. Chapter 9 draws together the

findings of the study that parent-school collaboration is essential to the creation of responsive schools, and that this is not an impossible task. Two tables, an index, and copy of the interview guide are included. (Contains 291 references.) (LMI)

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